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ABSTRACT

Young adolescence is an important and special period of transition on the trail of life. The child-becoming-an-adult needs to talk safely with an adult about the meaning of life and how to live it. This book, which is part journal and part workbook, provides an opening for the young person and the adult to have serious conversations with one another on issues that arise on the trail to adulthood. The journal provides 17 trail of life lessons for the youngster and adult to examine, and 17 structured opportunities for them to listen to and talk with one another, and to do an activity together. Both will read privately a brief reflection on a topic and think about what it means in their own life. Several questions are posed which should be answered in writing. The act of writing helps to crystallize thoughts in a logical and structured manner and provides an opportunity to re-examine ideas. After writing their answers, youngsters and adults get together to share their thoughts. This conversation is the most important part of the program. The open discussion enables both youngster and adult to grow and deepen themselves and their relationship. Topics include: attitude, persistence, decisions, health, balance, honesty, happiness, love, giving, courage, opportunity, learning, hope, responsibility, sexuality, family, and God. A four-page guide for parents is appended. (GCP)

LESSONS FOR THE TRAIL OF LIFE

Conversation Starters for Parents and Children

by
Brian T. Cunningham



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About the Cover:
The beautifully detailed painting of Great Falls Tavern, Maryland, ©
was painted by Eric Mohn. Readers can learn more about Eric's
remarkable story in the chapter on Persistence.

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DEDICATION

*I take privilege in dedicating this book to the three women
in my life who have made me what I am:*

*My mother, who raised me and guided the first 20 years
of my life in so many ways with love and discipline.*

*Lynda, my wife of 33 years, who gave me six wonderful children,
and all the love and leadership a man could desire.*

*My wife, Terri, who rescued me from the depths of despair when Lynda died,
and with whom I am blessed to be sharing the autumn years of our lives
dedicated to God and in service to others.*

and

*To my children and grandchildren who inspired the book and
much of the material. They teach me as much as I teach them.
They fill my life with joy, surprise and love.*



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PREFACE

Young adolescence is an important and special period of transition on the trail of life. At this age, all aspects of a youngster's life are changing. The most noticeable changes are physical, but the most lasting are attitudinal. During this period the young adolescent acquires and internalizes values that will last a lifetime.

The most significant relationship that a young adolescent needs during these formative years is a relationship with a caring, attentive adult. This adult may be a mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle or someone whom the youngster knows well and trusts. The adult needs to be a very keen listener able to hear behind the young person's actual words and to be prepared to pose hard questions and challenges to the youngster. The young adolescent will come to respect and appreciate the honesty, frankness and nonjudgmental attitude of the adult. This journal provides 17 trail of life lessons for the youngster and adult to examine, and 17 structured opportunities for them to listen and talk with one another and to do an activity together.



The child-becoming-an-adult needs to talk safely about the meaning of life and how to live it. This book — part journal, part workbook — provides an opening for the young person and the adult to have serious conversations with one another on issues that arise on the trail to adulthood. Both will read privately a brief reflection on a topic and think about what it means in their own life. Several questions are posed which should be answered in writing. The act of writing helps to crystallize thoughts in a logical and structured manner and provides an opportunity to re-examine ideas. After writing their answers, youngster and adult get together in a relaxed environment to share their thoughts. This conversation is the most important part of the program. The open discussion enables both youngster and adult to grow and deepen themselves and their relationship.

Jim Brennan, Ed.D.
President

Robert J. Kealey, Ed.D.
Executive Director

Department of Elementary Schools
National Catholic Educational Association

Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, 1999

INTRODUCTION

Dear Children,

As a grandfather I wanted to teach the lessons I have learned in my life to my grandchildren. So I wrote this book for them. Now I want to share the book with you and with your parents. We all need to know what our values are and how to hold on to them. Our values give us the stability we need throughout our lives in a world that is always changing.

I know that some children don't have two parents for many different reasons. So "parent" in this book can be your mom and dad and it can also be a grandfather, grandmother, uncle, aunt, step-mom, step-dad, or a teacher or coach who is close to you and willing to work through the book with you. You will gain the most from the book if one "parent" is a man and one a woman because they will have different views that are important for you to learn.

The lessons are taught by reading the text of each chapter, doing the exercises at the end of each chapter and an activity to be done with a parent. This way the lessons are experienced as well as read. This book does not give you answers. You will discover your own answers as you talk with your parents and think about the topics in this book. I hope this book teaches the importance of knowing what your values are, that life is basically good, and that it is an adventure to be lived to the fullest.

I have given a great deal of thought to the people I should thank for helping me with this book. So many people contributed to the philosophies, ideas, and methods in the book that I could fill several pages with their names. Instead of such a list of names, I wish simply to say thank you to God for my life and thank you to all those, throughout my life, who have helped me.

Brian Cunningham, February 1999

HOW TO USE THE WORKBOOK

There are three important reasons for the workbook: First, you and your "parents" will spend **time together**. Second, through answering the questions you get a **better understanding** of the lesson. Third, you and a parent together **experience** the meaning of each lesson through an activity. When you and your parents decide to do the book remember that while it is work it is also going to be fun. This book is an opportunity to do things with your parents, to have a set time with them each week, and to learn things that will help make high school (which is just over the horizon) easier. You may find that some of the lessons you learn here help right now with things going on in your life.

Don't be afraid to discuss whatever you want about each subject even when it is hard or you feel hesitant or embarrassed. Some questions will be difficult and you may want to change some of your answers after you have talked them over with your parents. Your parents may have different views on the same lesson. This book will help you learn that people have different ideas and all can be valuable.

Do your work in a quiet place at a regular time and your parents will do the same. Try not to work in a rush or at the last minute. Before beginning you and your parents will sign the **Commitment Agreement** and have it witnessed by a friend. A witness teaches the importance of publicly stating your commitment. When you complete the book have the witness present the **Certificate of Completion** and have a simple, fun celebration.

What you have to do:

1. **Sign** the Commitment Agreement with your parents and a witness.
2. **Decide** on the **first day of the two week period** when you will get together with each parent at the end of the first week to share answers.
3. **Choose the day and time in the second week** when you and one of your parents will do the activity. **Plan** what you will do and if you need to get anything ready in advance. Planning helps on the trail of life!
4. Both you and your parents then **read** a chapter and **answer the questions** on your own. Write your answers directly into the book.
5. **Get together** first with one parent and then with the other and read your answers aloud to each other. Talk about each other's answers, about the examples chosen, the meaning of the lesson and its application in everyday life.
6. **Do the activity** in the second week.
7. After the activity **write** a short summary and share it with both parents. Give each other a **pat on the back** for completing the lesson and go on to the next one.

COMMITMENT AGREEMENT

We agree that starting on _____ (date) we will do one chapter of Lessons for the Trail of Life every two weeks until we have completed the last chapter on _____ (date).

[Write names in on the lines below]

_____ Child

_____ Parent

_____ Parent

Every two week period each of us will:

1. Read a chapter and answer the questions in writing during the first week of the two-week period, taking the time needed to consider our answers.
2. Read aloud the answers and discuss them. Each parent will spend time separately with the child to do this during the first week of the two-week period.
3. Do an activity to demonstrate and/or give an experience of each chapter's value in the second week of the two-week period. The first chapter activity will be done with one parent, the second with the other and so on alternating till the chapters are completed.
4. The child will write a short summary of the completed activity and his/her understanding of the value to complete the work on each lesson.

Agreed to on the _____ day of _____ in the year _____
(day) (month)

_____ Signed by Child

_____ Signed by Parent

_____ Signed by Parent

Witnessed by _____ Name and Date

*"A journey of a thousand miles
begins with a single step."*

Lao-tzu



ATTITUDE



"The longer I live the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past — we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you — we are in charge of our attitudes." Charles Swindoll

Attitude is how we choose to look at things, how we think about them and being sure we do so truthfully. Charles Swindoll says that attitude is more important than the past. He is right because the past is influenced by our attitude toward it. Lets say we lost a tennis match last week and our attitude is that we will never play again because we really are no good at it. That's no help. What we can truthfully decide is we lost because the other person played better and we had neglected to practice. Then we can choose the attitude of determination and practice so we win next time. By changing our attitude we change how we view what happened (its not we're no good, its just we didn't practice) and this changes our view of ourselves and of the future.

Attitude, says Swindoll, is more important than money. If we have the attitude that we need to have lots of things to be happy and successful then money will be important and we will need lots of it. But if we take the attitude that happiness is our job, something we make for ourselves regardless of what we have, then we can see that attitude is more important than how much money we have. Attitudes can make or break a company, church, school or home because it is the attitudes of those involved in any organization or group that determines how that group will work. If a football team loses its first game of the season and the team gets despondent and the school is not supportive there will likely be more losses. But if the team has a good spirit and a good leader with the attitude that the loss is an opportunity to learn and win next time, then they have a greater chance to be successful.

Imagine a family planning a camping trip for the weekend which everyone is looking forward to. Then it rains so hard camping is out of the question. First, there is disappointment which is fine, but it must not become a bad attitude, such as it isn't fair or it should have been sunny. That won't change the fact that it is raining. The best attitude sees what opportunities the rain presents. The family can stay home and learn a new computer game together, rent some movies, do some painting or shared jobs around the house. The important thing really wasn't so much the camping, but the family being together. There will always be a future opportunity to go camping.

Another important attitude to learn is acceptance. An attitude of acceptance means facing reality so we can begin to deal with it. If we don't have enough money for a new bike, step one is to have an attitude of acceptance. Then, and only then, can you begin to do something about it. We can grow an attitude that says the money can be earned by getting a job. Or maybe there is nothing that can be done. Then that attitude of acceptance is needed. When things happen that we don't like we should pray to God to help us understand.

"We are in charge of our attitudes."

Knowing that we are in charge of our attitudes is one of the most powerful tools we will ever have available to us. We should use this tool to help us be our best in life and to influence other's lives in ways that are beneficial to everyone.

ATTITUDE

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **ATTITUDE**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **ATTITUDE ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **attitude** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why our **attitude** is important.

Question 3: Write about a time in your life when you know that having a positive **attitude** really made a difference.

Question 4: Name two people and something they each did where you think their **attitude** made a difference and say why. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience the importance of attitude. (Possibilities are: Do something and see what attitudes you and your parent have both negative and positive about what you did. Or find something that needs doing but which you don't really want to do and see what attitude you need to be able to do it.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **attitude activity**, how it helped you to understand **attitude** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

PERSISTENCE



To persist means to keep going, keep working and keep trying. To persist means we don't give up at the first sign of a difficulty or set back. Persistence is a mixture of determination and perseverance with faith in ourselves thrown in for good measure. One way to learn about persistence is to look at the lives of others who have had to face special difficulties and overcome them.

Eric Mohn who painted the picture on the cover of this book is a wonderful example of persistence. In 1963 Eric was in a car accident which left him confined to a wheelchair with only limited use of his arms. Eric paints holding the brush in his mouth using water-based paints. Oil-based paints make the brush too heavy. The water-based paints make it harder still for Eric as they are more difficult to work with. Eric paints wonderful scenes from the Pennsylvania countryside each with exquisite detail. Eric's persistence in finding ways to do what he wanted regardless of the accident is a lesson for us all. His persistence has given us the opportunity to enjoy his beautiful paintings and witness his loving attention to his art.

Another example is Denny, a young man who dreamed of being a veterinarian. When he learned he had diabetes he thought perhaps being a vet would be too hard so he went into business instead. After a couple of unhappy years he realized that he had to follow his dream of being a vet. He could not get into school in America so he went to the Philippines to study. After graduating he returned to the States where he had to take still more exams before he was qualified to practice in the U.S. Today Denny has his own animal hospital in

Highland, Maryland, where he lives with his wife and two children. From Denny we see that giving up a dream can make us unhappy. So, even if the odds seem to be against us, we still have to make the effort and give it a try. Once we are on the road towards our dream persistence helps us reach our goal.

From the lives of Eric and Denny we learn we can persevere and we can succeed, despite what life throws our way. Neither Eric nor Denny could change their physical disabilities. They both found ways to accommodate to their limitations but not let them get in the way of their goals.

Our first chapter on attitude has a lot to do with whether we reach our dreams or not and putting the right attitude together with persistence can move mountains. If we want to get on the basketball team at school we will need to persist with practicing our skill, watching what we eat, getting enough sleep and fitting it in with our studies. If our attitude is positive then we have a powerful combination. In the next chapter we will read about how to make decisions which is a third powerful ingredient we need for success.

When we come to the difficult passages in our lives, whether it is at school, in a sports game, getting into college, in work or in family life, we will have to maintain a steady pace, put all our energy into the climb, and believe in ourselves so we can get to where we want to be. Giving up is easy, keeping going when it is boring or hard or we are tired that is a true test of character and of commitment.

From a wise grandmother comes this verse:

**"Good, better, best, never let it rest,
Until your good is better and your better best."**

PERSISTENCE

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **PERSISTENCE**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **PERSISTENCE ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **persistence** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why **persistence** is important.

Question 3: Write about something you have done recently that required you to be particularly **persistence**.

Question 4: Name two people you think best express **persistence** and why. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **persistence**. (Possibilities are: Could be as simple as doing 100 strokes to stir a brownie mix. You could walk around the block together every day of the second week. Learn a poem or Bible verse. Choose a task and stick with it regardless of what is on TV or what anyone else is doing.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **persistence activity**, how it helped you to understand **persistence** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

DECISIONS



We are making decisions all the time, some small, some large, and many we don't even notice. Some decisions are hard and will have a significant impact on our lives. For these decisions it is good to have a system that helps organize the factors to be considered. PIES is such a system. PIES stands for Physical, Intellectual, Emotional and Spiritual, and is explained in this chapter. In addition, it helps to have someone to talk a decision through with who will not necessarily always agree but will help by arguing the pros and cons. This person is often referred to as the "devil's advocate". The term used in this book is "Constructive Dissenter." This person in a positive way can argue, debate and test the proposed decision with love and care. There is more on this in the Family chapter.

When we have an important decision to make — whether it is a personal matter or has to do with school or work — we can use PIES to rank the considerations and score them in a way that helps us clarify all our thoughts on the issue. If our heart and mind then agree with the results of the PIES test, our decision is made. If there is no clear answer we may want to talk to our Constructive Dissenter and do the PIES exercise again.

"For every decision the considerations will be different."

To try out PIES, we will use the example of choosing a high school, but remember that for every decision the considerations will be different which is why a system for deciding is important. Before doing the PIES exercise we will visit the schools and talk to others who have attended each school. When we do the PIES exercise we should sit down alone somewhere quiet and with enough time to complete the analysis.

Beginning with P for Physical, the location of the school and sports facilities could be factors to consider. I for Intellectual includes teachers, reputation and courses. E for Emotional is our feelings and intuition, and our gut level reactions to the school. S for Spiritual includes what does the school teach about God.

In the Rank column, give a rank of importance to each PIES criteria. In the example below, Courses, Intuition and Spiritual are ranked as most important while Sports is ranked the lowest in importance. Ranking differs for each individual. Next, score each school on each criteria using a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the top score. Multiply the score by the rank to get a total for each school on each criteria. Total the score column for each school. In this example, school #2 is a clear winner. This done we ask ourselves if our heart and mind agree with the result. If there is doubt then we can talk with our Constructive Dissenter who we know will be honest with us before we make our final decision.

			School #1		School #2		School #3	
	Criteria	Rank	Score	Total	Score	Total	Score	Total
P	Location	7	5	35	10	70	7	49
	Sports	4	0	0	7	28	7	28
I	Teachers	8	8	64	10	80	5	40
	Reputation	8	6	48	8	64	7	56
	Courses	10	10	100	8	80	7	70
E	Feelings	6	5	30	7	42	5	30
	Intuition	10	8	80	10	100	7	70
S	Teach about God	10	9	90	10	100	7	70
	TOTALS			447		564		413

Using PIES takes practice and the first few times we need someone who has experience to guide us. It is important to remember that we make the best decision we can based on what we know at that time. Later, if there is new information and there surely will be, we can make a new or adjusted decision. PIES makes it easier to reach those decisions that will affect our life and the lives of others with confidence.

DECISIONS

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **DECISIONS**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **DECISIONS ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what a **decision** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why it is important to have a system for making **decision**.

Question 3: Write about an important **decision** you have had to make in the last year and describe how you went about making it.

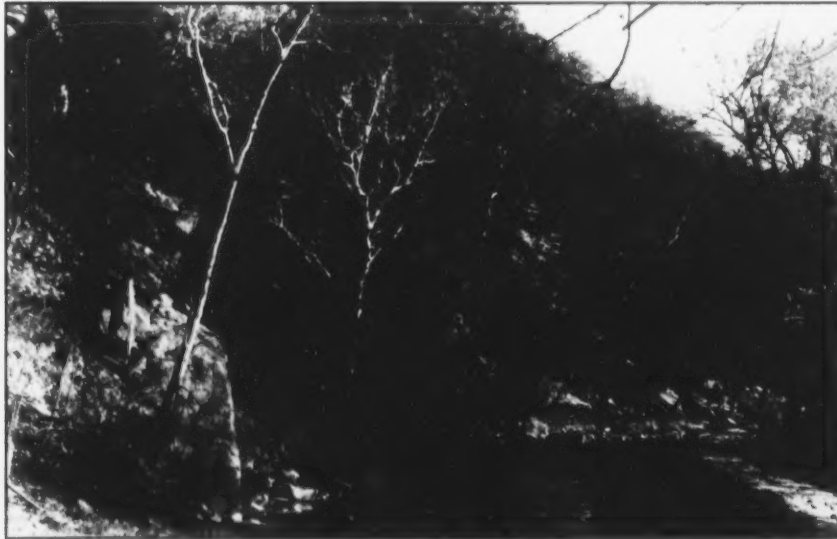
Question 4: Name two people who you think are good at making **decision** and say why. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **decision-making**. (Possibilities are: Pick something that you can use PIES for. Make a list of all the decisions you and your parent make while you are together-you will be surprised how many there are.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **decisions activity**, how it helped you to understand **decision** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

HEALTH



"Look to your health; and if you have it, praise God, for it is a blessing money cannot buy." Izaak Walton

We need to give health first priority because without good health there will be much we cannot do or enjoy. Real health includes physical, mental and spiritual well-being. When we are young we are usually physically strong enough to do the things we want to do: hike, bike, run and play sports. Our parents watch out for us, seeing to it that we eat right, get enough exercise and sleep. When we grow up it is our job to keep ourselves physically healthy.

"Key to our physical well-being is to avoid alcohol and drugs."

Drugs, cigarettes and alcohol are addictive which means that once we start to use them it is very hard to quit. Key to our physical well-being is to avoid alcohol and drugs. These are dangerous and destructive and will not only ruin our physical health but ultimately our mental health as well. They also will cost a lot of money, money we usually need for other things. When we hear our parents and others telling us to stay away from these substances we must take them seriously because to use them is to put our life at risk.

Our physical well-being begins with eating right so we have the energy to study and work as well as play. We can learn about nutrition from parents, teachers, doctors and nutritionists. There are a lot of wrong and misguided ideas about diet and some are extremely dangerous. We should eat regularly three to five times a day and include protein, fruits,

vegetable and carbohydrates in our diet. Proteins are found in meat, fish, cheese or eggs. Fruits and vegetables are necessary to provide the vitamins and minerals we need. Carbohydrates such as potatoes, breads and pasta help with energy production. Good, balanced eating habits will serve us well throughout our lives.

The second ingredient for our physical well-being is a regular exercise program, which includes aerobics, muscle training and flexibility. Aerobic activities include running, biking, hiking, skating, rowing, etc. done for a minimum of twenty minutes, four to five times a week to keep the heart and lungs strong. To build muscle strength and endurance we need to do a routine of exercises using weights three times a week. Flexibility is our ability to move and stretch, such as touching our toes. If our muscles tighten we are at greater risk for accidents and strained muscles. We should stretch every day if we can, especially if our work keeps us in the same position a lot of the time. Key to enjoying exercise is variety and liking what we choose. Parents, a school coach or qualified fitness teacher can advise us on what we need to do and how to do it properly.

Exercise also helps with our mental health. Good physical health gives us a basic good feeling and lifts our spirits. It helps when we are tired or are going through difficult times. It especially helps if we can get outside and walk, run or bike vigorously. We will still have to deal with the problems, but it will be easier. Endorphins which are released into our blood during exercise help to energize and calm us.

For our mental health we should keep an attitude towards ourselves that says we are okay just the way we are and that God loves us for the unique person we are. We must remember that we have value and worth and not only have much to give but are worthy of receiving much. When things go well, we should give ourselves a pat on the back. When things don't go well we must not beat up on ourselves but quietly look at what went wrong, talk it over with someone we trust, see what we can learn from it and get on with our life grateful for the lesson.

Our faith and trust in God is the key to our spiritual health. We should thank God every day for the life He has given us, and take good care of ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually as an expression of our gratitude and so we can live full, productive lives.

HEALTH

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **HEALTH**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **HEALTH ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **health** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why **health** is important.

Question 3: Write about some things you do to stay **healthy**.

Question 4: Name two people you think take care of their **health** and say why you chose them. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **health**. (Possibilities are: Walk, run, swim, bike ride, shoot baskets, hit baseballs, kick a soccer ball or lift weights. Or learn how to check your own pulse, take your aerobic heart rate, plan an exercise program. Or clean out the medicine cabinets in the house as a health safety exercise.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **health activity**, how it helped you to understand **health** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

BALANCE



Throughout this book the question of balance comes up. In the chapter on Decisions we learn about weighing and balancing the different physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual factors in order to make the best decisions we can. In the chapter on Health we read about balancing different types of exercise and eating a balanced diet. The chapter on Giving tells us of the need to balance giving and receiving for ourselves and others. We have to balance work and play, which opportunities to take up and which not, and our responsibilities to ourselves, to others and to society.

"Knowing how to make choices and maintain a good balance in all areas of our life is very important."

Clearly we need to know how to balance as we walk the trail of life in the same way we need balance when we hike the Goat Trail at Great Falls (for those who live in Maryland where this book was written), or any varied and interesting trail. On the trail where the path is narrow to keep our balance we slow down and use our arms to stay level and steady so we don't fall. The same principles apply in life. There is so much going on in our world today. We have access to more information than we ever imagined. Knowing how to make choices and maintain a good balance in all areas of our life is very important.

One area in particular where getting out of balance can cause unhappiness is the area of money. We must keep a balance between what we earn and what we spend and know when and how to borrow or lend money. Let us imagine we want to buy a bike which costs

\$175 but we only have \$75 saved up. The bike store owner will sell us the bike if we put down \$75 now and agree to pay the \$100 over the next five months. To stay in balance we should only agree if we know we can earn \$20 or more every month for the next five months. If we can only earn \$10 a month we can't pay the debt and we will be unhappy. By the time we are adults we should know how to balance a checkbook and how to do a personal budget of what we need each month to live on. We can practice with the allowance we get from our parents when we are young by keeping track of what we spend our money on and how fast it runs out.

Whatever we borrow or lend we need to be sure the debt can be repaid — whatever the debt may be. When we do a lot for someone they may feel they are in our debt and we should give them the opportunity to give to us. This keeps things in balance and creates a circle of giving and receiving that is at the heart of all good relationships.

When life gets out of balance we need to know this and have ways to correct it. Usually we know because we start hurrying from one thing to the next without enough time for it all, we feel stressed and we get upset with those we love when we normally wouldn't. At those times we must take a break. We can go for a walk or a bike ride alone to clear our head or spend time on a hobby and let everything else wait a day. Or we can spend time with a family member or friend, have some fun and laugh a little. Years ago Dr. Norman Cousins following his heart surgery discovered that his body got well from the medicine but laughing with his visitors is what healed his spirits. Just the physical act of smiling can change our attitude, release stress and how we feel. Then we can look at how things got out of balance and what to do about it.

Throughout life things happen that will make us happy or sad. We have good days and bad. We must remember the good days when we are having a bad day and know when we are sad that things will get better. We need to take a longer view so we don't let what is happening right now throw us off balance. In time — in the long run — things really do have a way of balancing out.

BALANCE

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **BALANCE**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **BALANCE ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **balance** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why **balance** is important.

Question 3: Write about a time in your future when you think **balance** will be important. It can be a week from now, a month, a year or years.

Question 4: Name two people who have demonstrated the importance of **balance** and say how they did so. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **balance**. (Possibilities are: Play on a teeter-totter or try roller blading or standing on one leg to get the physical experience of balance. You could ask your parent to show you how to balance a checkbook.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **balance activity**, how it helped you to understand **balance** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

HONESTY



"Oh what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive."

Sir Walter Scott

"Honesty is the best policy" — it really is. Lying gets complicated and gets us into trouble. That is what Sir Walter Scott meant by the words above. When we are not honest we begin to weave this really tangled and messy web of lies that will end up harming us and others. Dishonesty drains our energy and can actually make us sick. Honesty with ourselves and others is not only what we should do but it makes life easier.

Times have sadly changed since Sir Walter Scott's time. People used to place great importance on having a clear conscience. Today many people don't think of this or know what it means. Our conscience is the voice inside that tells us what is right and what is wrong. There are times when we do things, such as telling even a small lie, and afterwards we get an uncomfortable feeling and can't get it off our mind. That uncomfortable feeling is what we call shame. We are ashamed for not having told the truth. It can even take the form of feeling that we want to hide and escape from our own actions. That feeling of shame is our conscience telling us that we need to own up to the truth.

It is very important that we are always honest with ourselves. This can be difficult. Sometimes we feel things we'd rather not feel, such as anger towards someone we love or jealousy or fear. The best thing we can do, the first thing we have to do, is acknowledge

how we are feeling. Not until we do that can we begin to deal with the feeling. Acceptance is the route to successfully dealing with disturbing feelings.

When we tell the truth we don't have to hide anything. We do not have to be afraid of what others might find out. When we are truthful, we are consistent and can rely on ourselves and others know they can trust us. If we lie we waste energy worrying about it, wondering what lie we told to whom and afraid of being found out. There will be times when we don't tell the truth. We may do it because we are afraid or we think someone may laugh at us or blame us. When this happens as soon as our conscience wakes us up we must own up. When it is hard to know just what the truth may be, take time to find out. If by chance we say something believing it to be true and it turns out otherwise, we can correct it right away and people will understand.

When we make decisions we must look at all the circumstances and who will be affected by our decision and whether it might hurt anyone. Then we must take steps to be honest and truthful and not try to skirt around the affects of our choice. We can all learn to communicate better and to talk with one another more. It is often hard to tell people what you really believe but it will be worth it. Others will be able to trust and rely on what we say.

"Honesty and a clear conscience adds to our happiness".

Living honestly enables us to have a clear conscience. If it gets clogged and we can't work things out we can ask for help from parents, grandparents, trusted friends or a professional person who can help us to see things more clearly. Honesty and a clear conscience adds to our happiness. Honesty must also be the guiding principal in our relationship with God. We should tell Him everything knowing He will sort it out, guide us to the truth and help us to live according to His commandments.

HONESTY

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **HONESTY**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **HONESTY ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **honesty** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why **honesty** is important.

Question 3: Write about a time when you were less than totally **honesty**, how you felt and what you did about it.

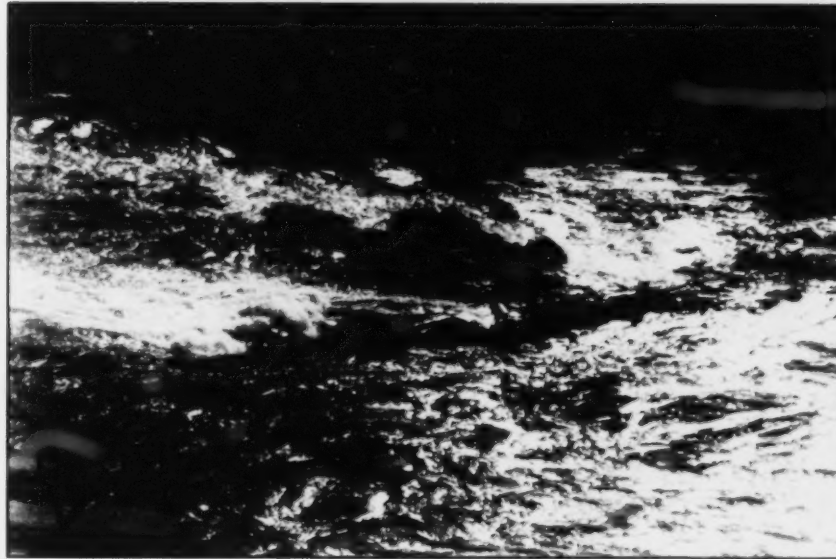
Question 4: Name two people you think lived or live **honesty** and say why you chose them. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **honesty**. (Possibilities are: Go to the library and look up the historic figures or famous people you chose as examples of honesty. Is there anything right now that you are not being honest about and if so what can you do about it?)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **honesty activity**, how it helped you to understand **honesty** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

HAPPINESS



"Happiness is equal to results minus expectations."

Brian Cunningham

The United States is governed by the Constitution. Included in the Constitution is the Bill of Rights which states that each person has the right to "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." What does it mean to "pursue" happiness? If we pursue it will we catch it and how do we know when we do? Happiness is what we experience when we do what is best for ourselves and others. Happiness is also the result of having the right attitude. None of us is happy all the time, but that is not the point. The point is to strive to be content in life and to share that contentment and happiness with others.

"Happiness can be surprising".

Happiness is to be found in different things at different times. Happiness can be surprising. Things we thought would make us happy don't and others unexpectedly do. We can find happiness in friendships and sports. We find it in love and marriage and with our children and grandchildren. We can find it in our work and our play and just simply in our hearts. It is important to know those things that make us happy. It is equally important to learn how to approach life so that we have the best chance of being happy.

A formula that can work well is: Happiness equals results minus expectations. If we set our expectations too high it is going to be hard to be happy. If we want to be good at a

sport and the goal we set is to be the best there has ever been, we are asking a lot of ourselves. We do better to decide to be as good at a sport as we personally can be. We have to train hard, practice and learn techniques, set reasonable goals and continually improve our skills. If we approach the sport this way, we will likely reach each goal we set and be happy with the results. And, just may be, we turn out to actually be the best in the world, but it comes as a bonus on top of having enjoyed simply being our personal best.

We should try to be our best in whatever we are doing but not aim so high that we cannot come close to our goals. Goals that are realistically within reach keep us motivated and enable us to realize the happiness equation of keeping a balance between results and expectations.

Happiness is not always within our control. Events come into our lives that cause us unhappiness. If there is unhappiness in our life we need to accept it, allow time to get over the pain of what happened, and ask God's help as we move on with life. Sometimes we make ourselves unhappy because we are looking at something the wrong way. Sometimes our thoughts make us unhappy. We need to make the effort to look at things differently or change our thoughts if we can.

At times a feeling of happiness (often called contentment) just wells up inside us for no particular reason. This is an inner happiness regardless of outside events. This is a special experience to be treasured. Most of us worry so much we don't have time to even see if we are happy. We need to stop and stand still long enough to find out. Maybe in this moment we are truly happy and would have missed knowing this if we didn't take time to notice and enjoy our happiness.

HAPPINESS

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **HAPPINESS**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **HAPPINESS ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **happiness** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why finding what makes you **happy** is important.

Question 3: Write about a time in your life when you remember being particularly **happy** and say why.

Question 4: Name two people who you think had or have much **happiness** in their life and say why you think this. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you can experience **happiness**. (Possibilities are: Choose something, set reasonable expectations, do it and when you are successful notice this makes for happiness. Or choose something that helps others because then the happiness can double.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **happiness activity**, how it helped you to understand **happiness** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

LOVE



"Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. ... three things that last forever: faith, hope and love abide, ..."

I Corinthians, Ch. 13.

God gives each of us an infinite capacity to love and it is our responsibility to express our love for the life we have been given, for others, and for what we do. Love is a feeling and an activity — a noun and a verb. To feel love for another person or for what we do is a wonderful experience, but feelings come and go. We must learn to express our love through being actively loving, often despite what we are feeling. Loving involves promise and commitment. We promise to love through good times and bad.

Love is described by St. Paul in his First Letter to the Corinthians in the New Testament of the Bible. In Chapter 13, Paul writes about the qualities of love and how love is shown through how we behave. St. Paul says "love is patient and kind, not jealous or boastful, arrogant or rude". Being human and imperfect we get impatient, even unkind and rude. That's okay. When this happens we need to make amends, and apologize as soon as we can.

Paul tells us that love is cooperation with others not power over them; he says that "love does not insist on its own way." Nor is love "irritable or resentful" and "love does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth". If we do wrong when we know better there is no love in that. We should rejoice only in what is true. St. Paul says "love bears, believes, hopes and endures all things". When things are tough, love can help us to look beyond the moment and see the larger picture, knowing there is always hope and we can endure. If we take a loving attitude when someone hurts us or is unkind, we can see it as a small part of a much larger experience of being loved and cared for.

"Loves includes respect. Love includes attention."

Love includes respect. We should treat all people and ourselves with respect and they should do the same for us. We should respect our work and how we do it. Love includes attention. We should pay attention to what we are doing. How can we say we love someone if when they are talking to us we don't pay attention. Or we say we love plants and flowers but we never bother to water them. Love is what makes things work and work well. John Ruskin a 19th century British writer said, "When love and skill work together, expect a masterpiece." Love and skill together, whatever the activity, enable us to be our best and to do our best.

"Love never ends," says St. Paul. God's love for us is eternal, nothing can change it. In our world sometimes it seems love does end. People get divorced saying they no longer love each other, but that is only part of the truth. The love they had for each other during the marriage was real and that has not changed. What has changed is their ability to continue to love each other in ways that are important and meaningful. Love remains though, the love they shared, the love they take with them and the love both will hopefully find in the future.

What Paul wants us to understand is that there is always love to be found in ourselves and in others. The choice is ours. We can approach each day, person and event from a position of love or from a position of indifference. Look around and you will see that where there is love there is growth, serenity, understanding, trust and hope. And, as Jesus showed us, acting out of love can change the world.

LOVE

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **LOVE**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **LOVE ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **love** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why **love** is important.

Question 3: Write about an experience of **love** that has meant a great deal to you.

Question 4: Name two people who you think express the true meaning of **love** and say why. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **love**. (Possibilities are: Is there anyone you haven't said "I love you" to when you should have? Or take something you haven't had a loving attitude towards and try loving it and see what happens to you. Give to someone in need with no thought of reward.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **love activity**, how it helped you to understand **love** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

GIVING



"Lord, ... grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; ..."

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

True giving is when we give freely with no thought of whether or not we will get anything back. We do it because we want to. If we get something new, like a toy or game, and our sister or brother wants to play with it and we let them without thinking "what is in it for me," we are giving freely. When their faces light up as they play with the toy, that is a gift to us; that is a blessing beyond measure.

We live in a world that pays a lot of attention to material and tangible things. This is all right up to a point, but it gets out of balance. If we are not careful we focus on how much money we have and on what we are getting for what we give. If we don't get what we want or think we should get we will sometimes withhold giving. That is not right. We should keep giving. To stop giving hurts us in our hearts as much as it can hurt those we could give to and don't. In a recent episode of the TV program, Chicago Hope, they pretended one of the doctors came back from heaven to talk to another doctor who was very ill. The one who was ill asked what was life about and the one who had come back from heaven replied that there was only one answer and that was "giving and receiving."

"The reward is in the giving."

In giving there is always a receiving though we often fail to notice it. The reward is in the giving. If we want to experience what it feels like to truly give and receive in unexpected measure, we should look for an opportunity to give to those less fortunate than ourselves, who perhaps can give nothing back except their gratitude and maybe not even that. For others less fortunate we can organize a clothing or food drive, join a run or walk in aid of those who are hungry or homeless, serve meals at a shelter or read to someone who is blind.

There is so much to be done. There are always opportunities for us to do something and maybe even lead the way. Others will follow our example discovering the joy of giving without thought of any reward as we are taught in the life of Jesus. There are so many ways to give and the size of the gift isn't important. It could be as simple as smiling at a person helping you in the store, getting water for your dog's bowl, doing the dishes so mom gets a break, or welcoming someone new at school.

We need to give to ourselves. Often we are taught it is selfish to give to ourselves. This is not true. We need to give ourselves a break, time to relax, exercise and be with friends. This refreshes us and gives us the support and courage we need to go out and help others. If we are tired it is hard to give to someone else, but if we take time to get a good night's sleep, then the next day we can do more and give more.

We also need to know how to receive. When we receive gracefully we give the person who is giving to us the pleasure of doing so. If we refuse to let people give to us we deprive them of the joy of giving. So to receive as we do from our parents and friends is a gift to them. Receiving is also important because it is important to keep giving and receiving in balance. We talked about balance at the beginning of the book. A balanced cycle of giving and receiving creates a continuous circle of support for one another giving us greater feelings of security, joy and happiness.

GIVING

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **GIVING**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **GIVING ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **giving** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why **giving** is important.

Question 3: Write about a time in your life when you gave to someone else in a special way and say why it was important to you to do it.

Question 4: Name two people who you think show the true gift of **giving** and say why you chose them. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **giving**. (Possibilities are: Take things in good condition you don't need (child and parent) and deliver to an organization that needs them. Or give your time to feed the homeless or visit someone who is elderly. Give something to yourselves so you see what that is like as well.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **giving activity**, how it helped you to understand **giving** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

COURAGE



"God, give us grace to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed, courage to change the things that should be changed, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other."

Reinhold Niebuhr

Courage is when we find inside ourselves the strength to do what we want and need to do. Courage is when we go ahead even when we are afraid. Courage is needed when there are things we have to change, especially if we know it will affect other people and there is a possibility they won't like what we are doing. Courage is needed when we do something new, when we make commitments and promises, and when it seems the odds are against us.

Courage is closely linked to acceptance and in this chapter we will learn about both. Acceptance is important in making life easier, enabling us to stay focussed on what is important and to deal with change. It is very hard sometimes to accept what happens in our lives and it is especially hard to accept that there are things we cannot change and have no control over. This is when we need courage. Acceptance and courage go hand-in-hand when we see something we don't like and want to change it. First we must accept how it is at the moment because it is only after accepting what is that we can begin to think of alternatives and changes we can make. When we are ready, our courage will see us through the changes.

Most of us don't like change. We look for security in life and when we find it we want to hold on to it. We develop habits and routines, make friends, and things become familiar to us. This helps us to know who we are and to feel we can rely on certain things. But change is inevitable whether we initiate it or the world brings it to our door and it will — sometimes slowly, other times suddenly and unexpectedly — and we have to draw down on all the courage we can find.

People who have studied change say the three hardest changes to deal with are the death of someone we love, moving to a new place, and separation from those we love through divorce or other circumstances. When someone we love — a brother, sister, mother, father, husband, wife or close friend — dies it is especially hard, particularly if the death is sudden and unexpected. We have similar feelings when we have to move away, when there is a divorce or we lose something important to us. At first we may not want to move on. We may be in too much pain. We may ask "why bother?" We need to remember that we don't have to go through anything alone and to ask for help from our family and friends and ask God to give us the strength we need. We must find the courage to grieve and give ourselves time to heal and accept our loss. In time we will be able to accept that there was nothing we could do. This takes a lot of courage; The same courage that enables us to eventually make changes and move on with our lives.

"Acceptance is making peace with those things that are simply beyond our power to do anything about."

When we have the courage to accept there are events we cannot change, two things happen: First, we feel better because we are not spending energy fighting something that isn't going to change. Second, that energy is now available to us to put towards something where we can make a difference. Acceptance is not resignation or hopelessness. Acceptance is facing facts. Acceptance is making peace with those things that are simply beyond our power to do anything about.

As much as we need courage to accept circumstances, we need courage to accept ourselves and others as we are. This means we accept who we are at the same time as we know we will grow and change. It means we can accept that we don't always do things right or well and sometimes we fail. And then we can rely on our courage to try again, to correct our mistakes and to do our best in whatever way we can.

COURAGE

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **COURAGE**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **COURAGE ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **courage** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why **courage** is important.

Question 3: Write about a time in your life when you had to be particularly **courageous** in accepting something you didn't want to have to accept.

Question 4: Name two people you think have shown **courage** and say why. Pick one that shows the importance of acceptance and courage. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **courage**. (Possibilities are: Do something you have been afraid to do or say. Perhaps you have been afraid to try something new on the computer, with your art work or even to try a new style of haircut or dress.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **courage activity**, how it helped you to understand **courage** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

OPPORTUNITY



"Carpe diem - Seize the day."

Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus)

In the movie "Dead Poet's Society" Robin Williams plays a teacher who tells his students to "seize the day". He urges them to believe in themselves and go after what they want and do it with energy, enthusiasm and passion. He is right. We should grasp the opportunities that are right for us when they come our way. We cannot afford to wait for something to be perfect or get anxious about what else might be around the next corner. The only 100% certainty in life is God. We can be 100% certain He will be with us always, help us no matter what and lead us to those things we need.

What opportunities we take up and what we decide to do helps us learn about ourselves and tells others what interests us. When we are young what we do is mostly decided for us by our parents. We study, play sports, spend time with family and friends, go to movies, watch television, travel on vacation and the like. When we get older it is our job to decide which opportunities we will "seize" and what we will do with our life. In trying to decide we should look for something that will make us happy personally and make a contribution to society. We shouldn't choose something because others say it is the best or most important. We shouldn't make our choice based on whether it will make us rich or famous. When we do what we like we are happy and others are happy for us. If we become rich and famous as well that is a bonus and a blessing for which we should be grateful.

Two tools we can use to help us decide which opportunities to seize are the 80/20 rule and, second, our level of enthusiasm. The 80/20 rule can help us when we are deciding about a school, a friend, a career and later who to marry. The way the 80/20 rule works is that when we are 80% sure of something we should get on with it. The remaining 20% we may not be able to know till later or it may be something we don't like but which we will be able to work it out as we go along. Throughout life we have to make choices without knowing the whole picture. We should think things through thoughtfully and carefully and then do the best we can. There is risk involved but there is risk in just about everything.

"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

The second tool is enthusiasm. To be enthusiastic is to be eager, enlivened and positive. Enthusiasm shows in how we behave and in all that we do. It impacts those around us. Henry Ford, the automaker, said that enthusiasm was a focal point in his life helping him overcome problems and motivate others. When we begin something we need a basic enthusiasm that gets us involved; an enthusiasm that hopefully will grow as we become interested and learn more. Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of America's greatest writers, said that "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." There will be times when our enthusiasm wanes and things seem dull. At those times we need to take a longer view and remember what it felt like when our enthusiasm was high. In time our enthusiasm will return. Remember too that our enthusiasm can inspire others to get involved and to take the risks they need to take for themselves.

As we grow up we need to put a lot of our enthusiasm into our school work and learning as much as we can about the world around us. We should seize the opportunities that will help us to do this. There is no way we can take up every opportunity that comes along or do all the things we want to do in life — there simply isn't enough time. What we can do is learn about ourselves and the world so we have the knowledge to make wise choices. We will make mistakes, but that's ok — mistakes are opportunities to learn.

OPPORTUNITY

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **OPPORTUNITY**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **OPPORTUNITY ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **opportunity** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why seizing **opportunities** is important.

Question 3: Write about an **opportunity** that you took up and what you did as a result. Pick something from the last year or two.

Question 4: Name two people you think seized **opportunity** when it came to them and say what they did and why you chose them. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **opportunity**. (Possibilities are: Find an opportunity in front of you right now, seize it and do it. It could be seizing the opportunity of a sunny day to go biking or fishing. Or seize the opportunity of this time with your parent to do or talk about things you've not had time.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **opportunity activity**, how it helped you to understand **opportunity** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

LEARNING



*"A man who can admit to a mistake
is wiser today than he was yesterday."*

Jonathan Swift

We can choose to be learning in a variety of ways every day of our lives. There is always something to be learned and this makes life a wonderful and exciting adventure. There is the important basic learning we must do in school and college. There is learning a skill for a job and the techniques for playing a sport. There is learning about people, especially our parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, teachers and important figures in history. We learn social skills so we can operate well in our society. We learn hobbies, such as gardening, painting, roller-blading — the list is endless. As we get older we learn more about ourselves, others and the world and gain the experience which helps us to know what we can do and how to contribute to our world.

Learning and wisdom go hand-in-hand. Sometimes even though something might be the right thing to do the wise thing is not to do it. So wisdom goes beyond knowing what is right and wrong or black and white and takes in a broader perspective so that our decisions balance many factors in a wise and correct way. Being wise means making the best choices and decisions using our heart and our mind. Wisdom is not reserved for those who are old; some of the wisest people are young people who live from their heart and intuition. What makes us wise is staying awake and aware of what is going on inside of us and around us. We need to listen, watch, study and learn all the time.

**"Learning from our mistakes enables us
to grow and help others in the future."**

Mistakes help us become wise because we can learn from them what we should do differently and what not to do again! Learning from our mistakes enables us to grow and help others in the future. We can learn a great deal from our relationships with our family, friends and teachers. Using the LCARE tool can help us. LCARE helps people feel valued and cared about.

- L = Listen to what is being said.
- C = Concentrate on what is being said.
- A = Acknowledge what the person is saying, perhaps by nodding, smiling, or whatever is appropriate.
- R = Repeat to the person in your own words what you have understood them to be telling you.
- E = Empathize by putting yourself in the other person's position and think how you want to respond.
Base your response on what you know and what you believe it is important to say.

When we go on interviews to school, or a job, we should use LCARE so we remember to listen, concentrate, acknowledge what we have heard, repeat it back, and respond.

We should slow down and give each person or thing we do the time it needs. When we are in a hurry or trying to impress someone we get careless. Even when we think we may know all there is to know about someone or something they will surprise us. Learning from each experience, being observant and using the LCARE tool will help lead us to become wise on the trail of life.

LEARNING

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **LEARNING**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **LEARNING ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **learning** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why **learning** is important.

Question 3: Write about something you **learned** recently and why it is important to you.

Question 4: Name two people who you think have benefited from **learning** and say why. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **learning**. (Possibilities are: Do the LCARE exercise sharing something important, parent to child and child to parent. Or choose something new and learn it together.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **learning activity**, how it helped you to understand **learning** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

HOPE



"Hope springs eternal ..."

Alexander Pope

Hope is eternal. Hope is a gift from God. With hope and trust in God, we are never alone. What does it mean to hope? To hope is to believe in God. To hope is to know our lives have meaning even when things are at their worst. To hope is to look forward to the future believing it will be good. To hope is to have a trusting heart and a positive attitude. Hope is intertwined with love for to hope is to love life. No matter what our past or what may be happening in the present we hold on to hope. Hope can be the one thing that keeps us going when times are hard. Hope keeps us motivated. Real hope is grounded in reality.

"Hope is intertwined with love for to hope is to love life."

We need to know the difference between hope and wishful thinking or idle fantasy for real hope requires effort. We may hope to see a friend, go to a movie with the whole family, play on a sports team, learn to swim or drive a car. All of these are realistic and beginning with hope we can take steps to make these things happen, God willing. To say "hope" when what we are referring to something beyond any realistic expectation is wishful thinking not hope. The same is true if what we say we hope for is wrong or bad. If it is negative or wrong then it isn't about hope.

What we hope for and look forward to helps us to know what we need to do now. If one day we want to be successful in business and make a contribution to the world, then we

must work hard now in school and later in college. If one day we hope to be a top athlete then now we need to train, stay healthy, practice and avoid things like drugs. If we hope to have a good day today then we have to go into it believing that it will be that way.

What we put out into the universe comes back to us like a boomerang. Some people call that karma. Really, it is the basic law of cause and effect. If we smile we will likely get a smile back. If we are angry we will evoke anger. If we throw a brick at a window it will break — the window not the brick! So if we hope to be happy, successful, helpful to others and kind then that is likely what we will be and what the universe will give back to us.

Even the hopes that go unrealized — the hoped for things that don't work out — give us something back, a lesson learned and space for a new hope. Hope really is eternal. It seems sometimes to go away and then we turn around and there hope is and we are not sure we can remember it coming back. It didn't, it never left. It is we who leave, we who forget, we who let our thinking go down wrong roads, we who lose faith and that's ok. Sometimes things can get so bad we want to give up and we don't believe in hope or the future and we are angry about the bad things that have happened to us. We need to mourn, to cry, be sad and then gradually, gently we reopen the door and look out and there is hope waiting for us. We need each other. To hope is to walk hand in hand with one another and with God and never let go.

HOPE

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **HOPE**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **HOPE ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **hope** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why **hope** is important.

Question 3: Write about a time when having **hope** helped and say why.

Question 4: Name two people who personify **hope** and say why you chose them. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **hope**. (Possibilities are: Give your time to someone less fortunate than you and see what hope it can give. Teach something you know to someone and see the hope in them as they start to get it.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **hope activity**, how it helped you to understand **hope** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

RESPONSIBILITY



*"Our talents are God's gift to us and our use
of those talents is our gift back to God."*

Unknown

We have a responsibility to use the talents God gave us to the glory of God, for our own good and for the benefit of others. In this way we give back to God in gratitude every day for all he gives us. To be responsible means to be accountable. To be accountable means we are willing to stand up for what we believe in, to admit our mistakes and to fulfil those responsibilities we take on.

While we are growing up our parents take on many responsibilities for us. That is as it should be. Gradually we take more responsibility for ourselves, for what we do and to care for others. We are responsible for what we do, what we say, what we think, what we do with others and when we are alone. As we grow older we take on responsibility for such things as getting up in the morning, going to school, studying, and trying to get good grades. Getting up late, missing school and not studying will lead to bad grades. If that happens it is our responsibility for not having done what was needed and we knew we had to do. We are responsible for our growth as a person to become a healthy and responsible adult. Things we did when we were five we don't do now and as we get older we will let go of other things because we have learned more.

"We each have unique gifts and a responsibility to use them."

We each have unique gifts and a responsibility to use them. It is our responsibility to answer God's calling, to care for our own needs and the needs of others. Being responsible is often thought of as hard, even boring or dull. Actually it is very rewarding to meet our ordinary, everyday responsibilities. As we grow we should keep an eye out for the things we enjoy and like to do as this may help us to find something we want to do as an adult, something we can love doing and being responsible for. Life is the choices we make and the choices we don't make and we are responsible for both.

One choice we must make is to take on some responsibility to those less fortunate than we are. There are many ways to do this — feed the hungry, help the homeless, comfort sick children, teach someone to read, and on and on. A second choice we must make is to accept our responsibility for future generations. Our children and grandchildren will live on this Earth and we had better leave them a world they can live in. Everything we do has an effect similar to dropping a pebble in a pond. In some American Indian tribes decisions are made having in mind how they will affect seven generations to come. If we pollute we leave behind a dirtier world than the one we were given. We must not do that. Those who came before us did a lot of work to be sure it would be here for us to enjoy. We must continue to preserve the land, the rivers and trees and oceans and to pass on a healthy world nourished by care and love to all the children to come.

As we go through life our responsibilities will change. In our twenties through our forties we will have major responsibility for our children. Once they are grown we can give our time and energy to other tasks taking on responsibilities that contribute to the world and finding ways to make a difference that will last a long time. We don't have to do this alone. Sharing responsibilities makes a job easier and often better solutions are found. Being responsible gives us the joy of living up to the best in us and enables us to help others.

RESPONSIBILITY

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **RESPONSIBILITY**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **RESPONSIBILITY ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **responsibility** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why **responsibility** is important.

Question 3: Write about something you are **responsible** for and what you have to do to meet that **responsibility**.

Question 4: Name two people you think meet their **responsibilities** and say why you chose them. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **responsibility**. (Possibilities are: In the first week choose something you will be jointly responsible for in the second week and follow through. Or join a clean up day if one is available to show responsibility for the environment.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **responsibility** activity, how it helped you to understand **responsibility** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

SEXUALITY



How we act with regard to our sexuality tells a lot about what we value. Sexuality is defined here as concern with or interest in sexual activity. No guide for children and parents would be complete without a discussion of sexuality and the important place it has in our lives. This is not an easy subject to discuss especially between parents and children. Having acknowledged that it makes us feel uncomfortable, we can overcome that and begin to talk about what life is and where sexuality fits in.

Life means something that is living: a person, animal, bird, flower or plant. We define life in an infinite variety of ways. One way is in terms of time. The average person lives 25 billion seconds which equals 7 million hours = 30,000 days = 1,000 months = 80 years. That is a lot of living time. As adults, we find someone we love, a special person, with whom we want to share our life. This sharing will include the desire for sexual union. Sexuality is a gift God gave to us so that we could create new life and to make sure we would want to do that God made it pleasurable. Because it is pleasurable we are tempted to do it when we shouldn't. When we engage in sex within a loving marriage it can be an enduring source of creativity, love and pleasure for us and our partner.

Engaging in sexual activity should be within marriage between two people fully committed to each other and able to bring up their children. Christ's teachings, the church and the laws of our society all intend that children be raised in a safe and secure environment.

Our ability to create life brings with it the awesome and wonderful responsibility to nurture the children we bring into the world. This nurturing needs to be physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual.

When a married couple engage in sex with each other for pleasure, not necessarily to produce children they still have a great responsibility to be faithful, gentle and kind. Sexual activity outside of marriage is wrong and risks bringing children into the world without being able to meet the responsibilities that are involved. It is likely the child will not have two parents. The one parent may have to struggle to make a living. The child will not have the benefit of both male and female viewpoints, love and encouragement. While there are many good single parents raising healthy and responsible children it is a very hard road to take. It is better for all concerned if there is first a family of two committed people before that family grows to three or four or more.

"We must not let the hormones, our curiosity or peer pressure lead us in the wrong direction."

We are not going to talk here about the sex act itself — the physical aspects — because that is taught in most schools today and we can ask or read about those aspects. The purpose of this chapter is to help us understand that in our teens there is an explosion of hormones, natural desires and a wish to experiment. There is often peer pressure to engage in sex and we get teased if we don't. We must not let the hormones, our curiosity or peer pressure lead us in the wrong direction. There is, as we noted at the beginning of this chapter, plenty of time.

Sexual activity between two adults who love each other and are committed to one another means that sex can be engaged in, in an atmosphere of honesty, laughter, responsibility, enthusiasm and happiness. All values we have read about in this book. We must also recognize that today there are many serious (even fatal) health risks involved in engaging in irresponsible sexual activity. So we must take our time, be responsible, trusting and patient. A healthy, loving marriage is a priceless gift worth waiting and working for.

SEXUALITY

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **SEXUALITY**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **SEXUALITY ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **sexuality** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why responsible behavior with regard to our **sexuality** is important.

Question 3: Write about what you know happens to people who do not act responsibly with regard to their **sexuality**.

Question 4: Name two people who have shown responsible behavior about **sexuality** and way why you chose them. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience the importance of responsible **sexual** behavior. (Possibilities are: Talk together about the importance of responsible behavior with regard to sex and obeying God's laws. Learn some of the consequences of wrong sex like abandoned babies, aids and the difficulties of teenage pregnancy.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **sexuality activity**, how it helped you to understand **sexuality** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

FAMILY



Family today can mean different things. For many of us, family is two parents and brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and grandparents who love us and we love them. For some this just isn't the case. Family is one parent or foster parents. The principal ingredient of what makes a family should be love, a safe place to live, to be nurtured, and to learn and grow into an adult life. If we have a loving supportive family, whether it is one other person or ten, life will be easier and we will be off to a good start.

**"We can become our own person all in good time
without causing a hurtful break from our family."**

The teenage years are hard on everyone in the family. As teenagers we want to break away from parents, make our own decisions and be different. This often gets difficult and frightening. We may find our parents disappointing or embarrassing. As teenagers though, it is important to remember that while breaking away and not listening may be what appeals to us, we really have to keep listening to our parents. They were once teenagers even though we may not be able to imagine that and we can benefit from their experiences and mistakes.

As we begin to decide who we are and who we want to be when we grow up, we should spend time with our family and other trusted adults who can teach us and who continue to provide help and protection till we are really ready to go on our own. It is

possible to grow and stay close to those we love and are important to us. We can become our own person all in good time without causing a hurtful break from our family. At those times when we don't get along with our parents we must be polite and respectful especially since that is how they must also treat us. Everyone has to try simply to do their best. It is as hard for parents to let kids go as it is for the kids to grow up.

Sometimes we can feel ashamed to ask our parents advice as we get older. This is sad because parents and family can be a great source of wisdom. We must not make this mistake. There is no shame in turning to those we love and trust when we need help whether we are sixteen or sixty.

In the chapter on Decisions, we talked about using a trusted person to help us make decisions. Someone in the family is a good choice for the "Constructive Dissenter." We need someone we respect and who has experience in the area in which we are trying to make a decision. Even if they don't disagree, they will help us to sort out our thoughts and feelings. When the person gives us their ideas and thoughts we should respect what they say and listen with an open mind. This is not about agreeing or disagreeing — it is about hearing different points of view to help us know if we are making the right decision. This can be especially important as we go through the years from twelve to twenty.

Eventually we will make our own homes with our own family which is an extension of the family we grew up in. We are also a part of the family that is the community we live in, the family that is our country and the family of nations that is our world. What happens in the world affects us all. We need to learn to love and respect one another and work together for the good of individual families, our community and our world.

FAMILY

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **FAMILY**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **FAMILY ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **family** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why **family** is important.

Question 3: Write about a special time you remember with your **family** and say what make it special.

Question 4: Name two people who you think demonstrate the importance of **family** and say how they do this. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **family**. (Possibilities are: A collage or drawing of your family showing each member and your favorite thing to do with them. Visit someone who doesn't have a **family**. Do an activity involving the whole family.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **family activity**, how it helped you to understand **family** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

GOD



"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name ..."

The Lord's Prayer

Our relationship with God is the most important relationship of our life. God loves us and we must love God. God's love is unconditional. This does not mean He lets us get away with things. It means that God forgives our mistakes and understands them. We also must love God without conditions. When we think of all God gives us it should not be hard to love Him. Yet when bad things happen we may be angry at God. At these times we must have faith that no matter what, God loves us and we must go right on loving Him.

In our relationship with God, we can use the word ACTS to guide us:

A is for Adoration. We are to worship God giving praise for all the wonders of this world and for His love of us. We praise God for His creation — the sun that warms us, stars that delight and amaze us, those who love us, for cats, dogs and other animals, for our own mind and heart. We will never run out of reasons to praise God.

C is for Contrition. Contrition means being sorry when we have done things we know are wrong and displeasing to God. We must talk to Him telling Him what we did and asking for His forgiveness and guidance. Then we have to make amends for what we have done by apologizing, paying to replace what we broke, or promising not to do it again. We can ask God to give us the courage to do what we need to and He will.

T is for Thank You. Every day we must give thanks to God for all He gives us — joy and sadness, success and failure, and all He sends to teach us. We should thank Him for our life, our family, food, clothing, a good grade, a quiet night's sleep and more. No matter how the day has gone we should thank God for at least three things every night before we go to sleep. We should even thank God for things we didn't like because we learned from them. Sometimes at the end of a good day we should stay still and listen carefully and we will hear God say "thank you" to us because He is grateful that we lived the day filled with love, and appreciation.

S is for Supplication. Supplication means to pray. Prayer is a conversation with God. We should learn to pour our hearts out to God telling Him everything and then letting Him guide us to do His will. There are many ways to pray and much to pray about. We need to find our own way of talking and listening to God. While we pray on our own at home, at school or wherever we are, it is also important to go to church and pray with others sharing belief and gaining strength from this shared belief. Church gives structure to our religious practice and is an opportunity to share our love of God with others.

**"God is our one true, everlasting companion on this journey of life.
He is friend, guide, teacher and Lord, always and forever."**

When we pray God may not give us what we want. It has been said that God only has three answers: Yes, No and Not Yet. This seems to be pretty true. What is important is that we become devoted to God and to Jesus his Beloved Son who He sent to be with us, and that we pray at all times and places for big things and small things, for joys and hurts, ourselves and our family, for those we don't know but who are in need. We must get a conversation going with God and listen to what He has to say. While He may not answer at that moment with what we think is an answer, in His own way and time He always does answer. God is our one true, everlasting companion on this journey of life. He is friend, guide, teacher and Lord, always and forever.

GOD

Questions to be answered during the first week of the two week study of **GOD**. Don't forget to set a time now with one of your parents for the **GOD ACTIVITY** which you will do in the second week.

Question 1: In your own words write one sentence that says what **GOD** is.

Question 2: Give three reasons why **God** is important.

Question 3: Write about a special time you remember with your **God** and say what make it special.

Question 4: Name two people who you think demonstrate the importance of **God** and say how they do this. One should be a person you know and the other someone from history or who is well-known today.

Question 5: Jot down suggestions for an activity so you experience **God**. (Possibilities are: A collage or drawing of your family showing each member and your favorite thing to do with them. Visit someone who doesn't have a **God**. Do an activity involving the whole family.)

SUMMARY: To be written by the child after the activity. Write a brief summary of the **God activity**, how it helped you to understand **God** and a gratitude statement.

Well Done!

TRAIL'S END

*Congratulations! You have completed these lessons
for the trail of life. Each gives you a necessary
and important tool for living*

*Every ending has a beginning. As you reach the
end of the book, you will be beginning
to apply these lessons in your own life.*

*Cherish the time you have had with your parents
learning the lessons and doing the activities.*

*One day I hope you will pass the lessons on to
your own children. Teach them these lessons
and your own so they can benefit
from what you have learned in your life.*

*There is much that is serious in this book and
it needs to be taken seriously. At the same time
remember to love life. Enjoy life to the fullest,
savoring every experience that comes your way.*

Have faith in God and reach for the stars.

May God bless you always.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

This certificate confirms that we completed the

Lessons for the Trail of Life Workbook

on _____ (date)

Child's Name _____

Parent's Name _____

Parent's Name _____

Each person is congratulated for completing each chapter of the *Workbook* by reading the chapters, answering the questions and doing the 17 activities.

Each thanks the other for having a positive attitude, balancing their schedules to find the time and having the courage to follow through on decisions. Each appreciates the honesty of the answers and discussions. Each enjoyed sharing answers on persistence, health, happiness, hope, learning and sexuality. Each is grateful for the experience of taking responsibility for the work and the opportunity to grow as a family, love one another, and to give each other the gift of time together. Each thanks God for all the blessings of this life.

Thanks for the fun we had.

Acknowledged by _____
Signature

Witnessed on _____
Date

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Cunningham was born in 1936 in Brooklyn, N.Y. When he was ten, he and his family moved to Bethesda, MD, where Brian spent his elementary, secondary and high school years. After high school he joined the Navy's Submarine Service and then went to college at Saint Francis in Loretto, Pennsylvania.

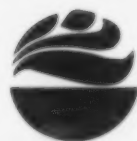
In 1959, Brian married Lynda Valtin and together they raised six children on their farm in Clarksville, MD. In 1964, after working for NASA, Brian formed his own company, Computer Entry Systems, which ultimately grew to employ over a thousand people. Lynda was tragically killed in an automobile accident in 1992. Brian was seriously injured in the same accident.

Brian turned his remarkable energy into founding Entrepreneurial Advocates, Inc., to mentor companies from start-up to mid-size corporations. In 1993, he married Terri Hilliard, a widow and mother of three children. They live with their youngest son, a high school junior, in Potomac, MD. Brian and Terri also work with the homeless and have helped to form Living Wages of Washington, DC, a group dedicated to the advancement, training, education and housing of recovering homeless people.

Brian spends his leisure time woodworking and sailing, but most of all enjoys being with and teaching his 13 (soon to be 14) grandchildren about life.

LESSONS FOR THE TRAIL OF LIFE

GUIDE FOR PARENTS



Department of Elementary Schools
National Catholic Educational Association
Washington, DC

PREFACE

Young adolescence is an important and special period of transition on the trail of life. At this age, all aspects of a youngster's life are changing. The most noticeable changes are physical, but the most lasting are attitudinal. During this period the young adolescent acquires and internalizes values that will last a lifetime.

The most significant relationship that a young adolescent needs during these formative years is a relationship with a caring, attentive adult. This adult may be a mother, father, grandparent, aunt, uncle or someone whom the youngster knows well and trusts. The adult needs to be a very keen listener able to hear behind the young person's actual words and to be prepared to pose hard questions and challenges to the youngster. The young adolescent will come to respect and appreciate the honesty, frankness and nonjudgmental attitude of the adult. This journal provides 17 trail of life lessons for the youngster and adult to examine, and 17 structured opportunities for them to listen and talk with one another and to do an activity together.

The child-becoming-an-adult needs to talk safely about the meaning of life and how to live it. This book — part journal, part workbook — provides an opening for the young person and the adult to have serious conversations with one another on issues that arise on the trail to adulthood. Both will read privately a brief reflection on a topic and think about what it means in their own life. Several questions are posed which should be answered in writing. The act of writing helps to crystallize thoughts in a logical and structured manner and provides an opportunity to re-examine ideas. After writing their answers, youngster and adult get together in a relaxed environment to share their thoughts. This conversation is the most important part of the program. The open discussion enables both youngster and adult to grow and deepen themselves and their relationship.

Jim Brennan, Ed.D.
President

Robert J. Kealey, Ed.D.
Executive Director

Department of Elementary Schools
National Catholic Educational Association

Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord, 1999



INTRODUCTION

Dear Parent,

As a grandfather I wanted to teach the lessons I have learned in my life to my grandchildren so that life may be easier for them. This book is the result. Children need to learn what their values are and how to hold on to them. I teach these lessons to my grandchildren when they are about ten. I know if I wait till they are a few years older it is going to be harder to get them to listen. The lessons are taught in three ways: reading the chapter, answering the questions and doing an activity. This book does not give answers; it provides tools that help children find their own answers to better equip them in life. I hope this book teaches the importance of values and that life is an adventure to be lived to the fullest.

Below is the "How To" for working through the book with your child. You will need a pad or notebook where you can copy the questions from the book and record your own answers. It is a vitally important part of the program that each parent answer the questions fully as you will be sharing and discussing these answers with your child. For young adolescents, love is often spelled "T I M E". Your involvement and enthusiasm for the project and the giving of your time to it will mean more than you can perhaps imagine now. You will find it is a gift beyond measure for you and your child.

There are four important reasons for you to do the workbook with your child. First, you and your child spend time together. Second, answering the questions gives you a better understanding of the lesson. Third, you and your child experience together the meaning of each lesson through an activity. Fourth, the book is a way to begin to move from a full-time managing job to a mentoring, guiding role with your child. In the teen years you need to let go and yet stay close; moving to the mentor-guide role helps to facilitate this change.

Introduce the book in a way that best suits your child, presenting it as both fun and work. If your child has a particular problem just now at school or at home this could be the lead-in to introducing the book using it to help you and your child talk about the problem more easily. You may need to start the discussion with some of the chapters as it may be hard for your child to do so. Guide your child if his/her ideas are not quite appropriate in a positive way so they do not feel put down or criticized. Help your child to see the problem for his/herself rather than you pointing it out directly. This is the best way for your child to learn. If each parent has a different view, discuss this with your child to avoid confusion and so he/she learns that people have different views and all can be valuable.

Encourage your child to work in a quiet place at a regular time and do the same yourself. Don't work in a rush or at the last minute. When you complete the book have a friend or family member present the Certificate of Completion and have a fun, simple celebration.

Brian Cunningham, February 1999

Steps in the Program

1. Sign the Commitment Agreement with a witness.
2. Decide on the first day of the two week period when each parent will get together with the child during the first week to share answers.
3. Choose the day and time in the second week when the child and one parent will get together to do the activity. Plan with your child what you will do and make any advance plans you need to. Planning helps on the trail of life!
4. Both parents and the child **read** the chapter and **answer the questions** (the child writes the answers directly in the book). Each person answers the questions on their own.
5. **Get together** (child and one parent, then child and the other parent) and read the answers aloud to each other. Talk about each other's answers, about the examples chosen, the meaning of the lesson and its application in everyday life, etc.
6. Do the activity in the second week.
7. After the activity the child **writes** a short summary and **shares** it with both parents. Give each other a **pat on the back** for completing the lesson and move on to the next one.

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LESSONS FOR THE TRAIL OF LIFE

"What a wonderful way to build memories and what a precious legacy to leave! I wish a wise grandfather would have prepared me to deal better with the challenges and losses that I would face." Rita Mohn, Mother and Grandmother

"In this sensitive work we find a remarkable blend of love, wisdom, and active outreach to young children who can learn from Brian's insights. His passion is a source of inspiration to all parents and grandparents, as he reveals and enlightens the little-trodden path of pro-active nurturing of the young. A book not to be missed by anyone responsible for the raising of a child — or for the nurturing of life itself." Evan Powell, Author

"I will never forget that you took me on the Trail. I think when I grow up and I have a nephew I will take him on the trail because you made me feel closer to you and I want my nephew to feel that way too." John L. Cunningham, age 10, Brian's Nephew

"The strength of this book is that it presents powerful philosophical ideas in pragmatic, easy to understand lessons. It is a pathfinder for people of all ages. I strongly believe the book will be a most useful and productive guide that my children will need for a successful and productive life." Ramex G. Skaff, Treasurer, Interstate Container Corporation:



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"Serving Educators Who Serve Children"

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